

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6735

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 0807

FOR NEA SISCO AND AID/NESA MCDONALD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AF, US, EAID

SUBJECT: AID TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 22225

1. I FIND REFTEL DISTURBING ON TWO COUNTS.

2. FIRSTLY, IT IMPLIES THAT USAID KABUL WOULD PROMOTE A PROJECT WITHOUT THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF ITS TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY AND WITHOUT THOROUGH COORDINATION WITH AID/W. I ASSUME THAT IT IS NOT RPT NOT NECESSARY FOR ME TO REMIND THE AUTHORS OF THAT TELEGRAM THAT USAID/KABUL IS DIRECTED BY EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS IN WHOM I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE. MOREOVER, KABUL 604, TO WHICH REFTEL RESPONDED, WAS INTENDED TO OBTAIN, IN RESPONSE TO A GOA REQUEST, INFORMATION CONCERNING THE TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY OF THE PROJECT IN QUESTION. IF IT TURNS OUT THAT OUR BEST JUDGEMENT IS THAT THE PROJECT IS NOT FEASIBLE, WE WOULD CONVEY THAT JUDGMENT TO THE GOA, TOGETHER WITH THE DATA THAT WOULD SUPPORT THE JUDGMENT. IF ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PROJECT MIGHT BE FEASIBLE, WE WOULD LIKEWISE SO INFORM THE GOA WHICH WOULD THEN DECIDE HOW IT WOULD WANT TO PROCEED WITH OR WITHOUT OUR ASSISTANCE.

3. SECONDLY, AND MORE DISTURBING, IS THE IMPLICATION IN REFTEL THAT WE SHOULD NOT FINANCE PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE OF AFGHANISTAN'S "DISMAL TRACK RECORD" IN IMPLEM-
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ENTING PAST PROJECTS. IF THIS WERE TO BECOME OUR AID POLICY

TOWARD AFGHANISTAN IN THE FUTURE, IT WOULD PREPARE A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT. AS I HAVE UNDERSTOOD MY POLICY GUIDANCE TO DATE, WE STAND READY, AS IN THE PAST, TO ASSIST AFGHANISTAN FINANCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY, WITHIN OUR CAPABILITIES. THIS IS WHAT I HAVE TOLD PRESIDENT DAOUD AND HIS PRINCIPAL SUBORDINATES. THIS IS A LONG-TIME U.S. POLICY WHICH HAS BEEN BASED ON OUR POLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE STABILITY OF THIS REGION, WHICH REMAIN SUBSTANTIAL, AS WELL AS ON OUR LEGISLATIVE MANDATE TO ASSIST EXTREMELY POOR COUNTRIES SUCH AS THIS ONE. CLEARLY THERE HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE DIFFICULT IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH AID PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT THESE ARE INEVITABLE IN ANY OF THE TRULY "LEAST DEVELOPED" COUNTRIES.

4. IN FACT, I THINK IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT IN TERMS OF ORGANIZING ITSELF IN ITS OWN WAY AND AT AN AFGHAN PACE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, THE DAOUD REGIME IS BEGINNING TO GIVE EVIDENCE OF A SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE WHICH THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ENCOURAGE IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY. WE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY GOING TO BE APPROACHED FOR ASSISTANCE ON A NUMBER OF PROJECTS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, PROBABLY INCLUDING IN THE HELMAND VALLEY AND PROBABLY INCLUDING SOME CAPITAL PROJECTS. TO ACHIEVE OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES HERE, WE WILL HAVE TO FIELD THESE REQUESTS WITH SYMPATHY AND BE PREPARED FOR A CONTINUING DIALOGUE ABOUT THE PURPOSES OF U.S. ASSISTANCE AS STATED IN THE NEW FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT, ABOUT LIMITATIONS ON U.S. RESOURCES, AND ABOUT THE TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY OF SPECIFIC PROJECTS. WE WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE IMAGINATIVE IN CONSULTING WITH OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS.

5. I SHOULD ADD THAT, AS THE DEPT IS AWARE, THE DAOUD REGIME HAS HAD SOME SUSPICIONS ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT. WE HAVE DONE WELL SO FAR IN DISPELLING THIS SUSPICION, AND I THINK WE WILL BE ABLE TO CONVINCE THE GOVERNMENT HERE THAT OUR INABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON FINANCING FERTILIZER IMPORTS IS NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. BUT FOR US TO THROW COLD WATER ON DAOUD'S DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES BY RESTING OUR CASE ON A "POOR TRACK RECORD" OF THE PAST, EVEN IF THAT STATEMENT WERE ENTIRELY ACCURATE, WOULD BE A MAJOR AND PERHAPS FATAL SETBACK TO OUR EFFORTS OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS TO ESTABLISH

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A USEFUL RAPPORT WITH THIS NEW PRICKLIER AND MORE NATIONALIST REGIME.

6. WE WILL HAVE SOME SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD CONCERNING OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE AFGHANS ON THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGY. MEANWHILE, UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO THE CONTRARY, WE WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE THE KIND OF POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE, AYPATHETIC APPROACH WHICH I BELIEVE BEST

SERVES OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS HERE.

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